

REMARKS

Claims 1-8, 14-29, 31-38, and 44-59 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are amended, claims 9-13 and 39-43 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Reconsideration based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully submitted.

The Examiner is thanked for the many courtesies extended to Applicants' representative in the course of a personal interview conducted January 27, 2004. The substance of that interview is included herein per MPEP §713.04.

I. The Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter

A. Claims 1, 7, 10, 14, 15, 20, 25 and 27-29

Claims 1, 7, 10, 14, 15, 20, 25 and 27-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 3,549,414 to Curran et al. ("Curran").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

B. Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18 and 20-29

The Office Action rejects claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18 and 20-29 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as unpatentable over EP 0 949 756 A2 to Ella.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully

submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

C. Claims 1-3, 8, 9, 11, 15 and 21-29

Claims 1-3, 8, 9, 11, 15 and 21-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,337,136 to Rittenhouse et al. ("Rittenhouse").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

D. Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15 and 20-29

Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15 and 20-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,307,447 to Barber et al. ("Barber").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

E. Claim 17

Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ella in view of U.S. Patent 5,587,620 to Ruby et al. ("Ruby").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

F. Claims 8 and 19

Claims 8 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ella in view of U.S. Patent 5,692,279 to Mang et al. ("Mang").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

G. Claims 5 and 8

Claims 5 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ella in view of U.S. Patent 5,894,647 to Lakin.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended

to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

H. Claim 13

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ella in view of U.S. Patent 6,093,338 to Tani et al. ("Tani").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

I. Claim 16

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ella in view of U.S. Patent 6,060,818 to Ruby et al. ("Ruby").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 includes allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 12. For at least this reason it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are distinguishable over the applied art. The remainder of the claims that depend from independent claims 1, 25, 31, and 55 are likewise distinguishable from the applied art for at least this reason, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-8, 14-29, 31-38, and 44-59 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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